



AdvancED® Self-Assessment
Standard 7:
**Commitment to
Continuous Improvement**



Adaptive System of **School Improvement** Support Tools

Welcome to the AdvancED Self-Assessment

The AdvancED Self-Assessment (SA) is designed to serve as a valuable tool that will assist schools in reflecting upon their effectiveness as well as prepare them for a Quality Assurance Review. The Self-Assessment is based on the seven AdvancED Standards, which serve as the foundation of the AdvancED accreditation process. In order to earn and maintain accreditation, schools must meet the seven AdvancED Standards, engage in a process of continuous improvement, and host a Quality Assurance Review at least once every five years.

The SA has been designed to engage the school community in an in-depth evaluation of each of the seven AdvancED Standards by creating a set of questions and rubrics that enable a school to most accurately describe its continuous improvement progress. In completing the report, a school identifies the evidence, data, information, and documented results that validate that it is meeting each standard. This self-assessment helps a school identify areas of strength and opportunities for improvement by reflecting upon questions posed in the indicators and rating themselves on a 4-level rubric scale.

The SA also serves as the primary resource for the Quality Assurance Review Team, which uses the report to prepare for the visit to the school. The team uses insights gathered from the report and information obtained during the on-site visit to provide feedback to the school and to make an accreditation recommendation.

The Structure of the Self-Assessment

The AdvancED Self-Assessment is taxonomically structured according to a hierarchy of fundamental elements for continuous improvement. The seven AdvancED Standards are research-based and outline through the indicators, questions, and rubrics those protocols and practices that are evident in successful education environments.

Seven AdvancED Standards

AdvancED Indicators

- Questions

- Rubrics

- Evidence

Standard-Level Contextual Narrative

Definition of the Standard and Impact Statement

The seven AdvancED Standards are comprehensive statements of quality practices and conditions that research and best practice indicate are necessary for schools to achieve quality student performance results and organizational effectiveness. The impact statement describes characteristics, processes, and actions that would be observable and verifiable in a school that effectively implements the standard.

Indicators

The indicators are operational definitions or descriptions of exemplary practices and processes. When seen together, the indicators provide a comprehensive picture of each standard.

Focus Questions

There are one or more focus questions linked to each indicator that provide an opportunity for the school to assess the degree to which practices and/or processes are in place that support adherence to the indicators. The focus questions are also intended to reinforce the other indicators of the standard to help the school arrive at a comprehensive understanding of the standard.

Rubrics

Each question provides 4 rubric-aligned responses that show the degree to which the school is able to verify its assessment of the question. The school should use the rubric as an opportunity to ask itself challenging questions and to respond with accurate answers geared toward self-improvement. After completing the rubric, the school can quickly see areas of strength and opportunity. The section asks, “To what degree are the noted practices/processes in place?” The rubrics have been developed on a 4-level scale:

- **HIGHLY FUNCTIONAL**
- **OPERATIONAL**
- **EMERGING**
- **NOT EVIDENT**

Supporting Evidence

The suggested supporting evidence section is designed as a starting point for school staff to think about the practices and/or processes being implemented and to identify evidence that will support its responses to the focus questions and rubrics. This section helps school stakeholders engage in a discussion about how the school knows it is adhering to the standards. The section asks, “What practices/processes are being implemented, and are they effective?” or said another way, “How do we know we are doing what we say we are doing?”

Standard-Level Contextual Narrative

For each standard, there is a contextual standard-level narrative section that allows the school to expand on and think more deeply about the responses to questions. These standard level questions provide an opportunity for the school to describe the school’s unique context as it relates to the standard.

Directions for Completing the Report

The Self-Assessment is to be completed by the school six weeks to six months prior to hosting a Quality Assurance Review (QAR) visit. It is strongly recommended that a wide and broad cross-section of the school community participate in completing this report. The completed report is submitted to AdvancED for use by the QAR team, as well as for a school's continuous improvement efforts.

In order to complete the Self-Assessment, the following steps should be taken:

- Read the information provided in each standard thoroughly. The impact statement and indicators will provide a very good overall understanding of the standard.
- Read over each question that is linked to an indicator and select the rubric that most accurately reflects the status of your school.
- Select from the list of suggested evidence that supports your rubric level selection.
- Answer the standard-level contextual narrative using the guidance provided by the prompts. Be thorough and concise in your answers, focusing on quality and depth over quantity.

Important Note:

If you use this document as a working draft of your report, please note that when you copy and paste content from this document to your web-based Self-Assessment, some special characters (such as dashes and colons) may not copy and you may need to do some minor editing of the format. Finally, a tool is provided for summarizing your conversations about your assessments and to facilitate discussions with your faculty and/or stakeholders.

Tools for Soliciting Self-Assessment Feedback

Provided at the end of this booklet is a set of tools that can help the school in soliciting and recording feedback from stakeholders on each of the indicators. Also provided are a set of instructions on how to best use the tools.

What is ASSIST?

You probably have noticed a small ASSIST logo on the cover of this packet. You may be wondering what this means. ASSIST is a new product being developed by AdvancED. The acronym stands for the Adaptive System of School Improvement Support Tools. AdvancED ASSIST is a web-enabled product that will help schools, districts, and other organizations facilitate and manage the school improvement process. When completed, ASSIST will provide the user with 11 modules that include a Profile, Self-Assessment, School Improvement Plan Builder, Stakeholder Surveys, Program Evaluation, Assurances Tracker, Implementation Tracker, to mention just a few.

All schools that are accredited through AdvancED (North Central Association and Southern Association of Colleges and Schools) are being provided their Self-Assessment through the ASSIST system. As we transition throughout the next several months, you will notice a gradual and welcome change.

The AdvancED Self-Assessment was designed and developed by a team of subject matter experts who drew upon research, on-the-ground experience, and extensive feedback from practitioners on the most effective approach to reflecting upon the conditions, behaviors, and strategies employed by an education institution in their quest for continuous improvement.



Standard 7: Commitment to Continuous Improvement

Standard 7 has 6 Indicators and 7 Questions.

Definition of the Standard

The school establishes, implements, and monitors a continuous process of improvement that focuses on student performance.

Impact Statement

A school is successful in meeting this standard when it implements a collaborative and ongoing process for improvement that aligns the functions of the school with the expectations for student learning. Improvement efforts are sustained and the school demonstrates progress in improving student performance and school effectiveness. New improvement efforts are informed by the results of earlier efforts through reflection and assessment of the improvement process.

Quality School Indicators

In fulfillment of this standard, the school:

- 7.1** Engages in a continuous process of improvement that articulates the vision and purpose the school is pursuing (Vision); maintains a rich and current description of students, their performance, school effectiveness, and the school community (Profile); employs goals and interventions to improve student performance (Plan); and documents and uses the results to inform what happens next (Results)
- 7.2** Engages stakeholders in the processes of continuous improvement
- 7.3** Ensures that plans for continuous improvement are aligned with the vision and purpose of the school and expectations for student learning
- 7.4** Provides professional development for school personnel to help them implement improvement interventions to achieve improvement goals
- 7.5** Monitors and communicates the results of improvement efforts to stakeholders
- 7.6** Evaluates and documents the effectiveness and impact of its continuous process of improvement

AdvancED Standard 7: Commitment to Continuous Improvement

- 7.1 Engages in a continuous process of improvement that articulates the vision and purpose the school is pursuing (vision); maintains a rich and current description of students, their performance, school effectiveness, and the school community (profile); employs goals and interventions to improve student performance (plan); and documents and uses the results to inform what happens next (results)
- a. *How does the school work through all the parts of a systematic school improvement planning cycle, beginning with gathering and analyzing data, and then using that information to establish a vision, set goals, choose strategies, develop a plan, implement the plan, and monitor and evaluate results?*

HIGHLY FUNCTIONAL

On a regular basis, the school community works through a systematic cycle of continuous improvement, which aligns all functions of the school with expectations for student learning. The chosen strategies are incorporated into a written plan that is responsive to the school's particular profile and vision, and they are specific enough to measure and evaluate. Data are collected that can be used to evaluate the strategies and inform the next cycle of planning.

OPERATIONAL

On a regular basis, the school community works through a systematic cycle of continuous improvement. The chosen strategies are incorporated into a written plan that is responsive to the school's particular profile and vision, and they are specific enough to measure and evaluate. Data are collected that can be used to evaluate the strategies and inform the next cycle of planning.

EMERGING

The school community has a vision and a data based profile. It is working for the first time through a systematic cycle of continuous improvement that identifies gaps, chooses responsive strategies, and establishes measurable goals.

NOT EVIDENT

The school community is collecting the data on which to base a systematic cycle of continuous improvement and/or is engaged in the process of commitment to a shared vision that will guide the improvement work.

Suggested Evidence:

Minutes/attendance lists from school improvement/other meetings
Schedule of school improvement planning topics showing attention to all stages in the cycle
School communication tools showing communication among stakeholders
Feedback/revision documents indicating responsiveness to feedback
Surveys
Other

AdvancED Standard 7: Commitment to Continuous Improvement

7.2 Engages stakeholders in the processes of continuous improvement

a. *How do internal and external stakeholders hear about the school improvement process?*

HIGHLY FUNCTIONAL

The school's strategies and tools for communicating with internal and external stakeholders about the improvement process and goals are two-way; they involve both explanation and listening. Stakeholders participate meaningfully in decision-making in all stages of the school improvement process (vision, profile, plan, results). Particular efforts have been made to reach out to parents and community groups that reflect the diversity of the school population.

OPERATIONAL

The school's strategies and tools for communicating with internal and external stakeholders about the improvement process and goals are two-way; they involve both explanation and listening. Stakeholders participate meaningfully in decision-making in all stages of the school improvement process (vision, profile, plan, results).

EMERGING

The school's strategies and tools for communicating with internal and external stakeholders about the improvement process and goals address the school improvement plan elements (vision, profile, plan, results) but need to include two-way communication.

NOT EVIDENT

The school's strategies and tools for communicating with internal and external stakeholders do not address the school's improvement process and goals.

Suggested Evidence

Newsletters describing vision, purpose, improvement strategies, and results

Handbooks reflecting vision

Website addressing school improvement

Annual report to the community

Surveys

Other

AdvancED Standard 7: Commitment to Continuous Improvement

7.3 Ensures that plans for continuous improvement are aligned with the vision and purpose of the school and expectations for student learning

a. How do the school's improvement plan goals, strategies, and activities align with and/or capitalize on existing programmatic elements to maximize student success?

HIGHLY FUNCTIONAL

The process followed by the team that develops the school improvement plan includes a step that assesses and strengthens the alignment of goals, strategies, and activities with other school programs. Non-instructional programs in the school are explicitly reviewed to identify potential contributions to school improvement goals.

OPERATIONAL

The process followed by the team that develops the school improvement plan includes a step that assesses and strengthens the alignment of goals, strategies, and activities with other school programs.

EMERGING

School staff members work to maximize program alignment with school improvement goals wherever possible.

NOT EVIDENT

The school improvement plan is developed in an effort to satisfy statutory requirements. Alignment with other programs is incidental.

Suggested Evidence

School improvement plan and process employed in development

Minutes of action items

Data analysis

Self-assessment findings

Surveys

Other

AdvancED Standard 7: Commitment to Continuous Improvement

7.4 Provides professional development for school personnel to help them implement improvement interventions to achieve achievement goals

a. How do professional development activities support strategies that are based on student needs and address the school improvement plan goals?

HIGHLY FUNCTIONAL

Professional development opportunities ensure that all staff members have the requisite skills to implement the school's chosen improvement strategies and to deliver student-centered instruction in a variety of ways in the classroom, including providing applied and relevant activities, demonstrating high expectations for all students, differentiating instruction, conducting authentic assessments, and displaying cultural sensitivity.

OPERATIONAL

Most staff members have received professional development needed to implement the school's chosen improvement strategies and to deliver student-centered instruction in the classroom, such as providing applied and relevant activities, demonstrating high expectations for all students, differentiating instruction, conducting authentic assessments, and displaying cultural sensitivity.

EMERGING

Some staff members have received professional development in at least one of the school's chosen improvement strategies and/or in some aspect of student-centered instruction in the classroom, such as providing applied and relevant activities, demonstrating high expectations for all students, differentiating instruction, conducting authentic assessments, and displaying cultural sensitivity.

NOT EVIDENT

Some staff members at the school demonstrate student-centered practices, but the primary emphasis of professional development is on teaching content. Development activities are not specifically linked to improvement goals or strategies.

Suggested Evidence:

Description (or lesson plans) of teaching practices that demonstrate student-centered instruction

Professional development schedule or topics

Spreadsheet of individual professional development plans cross-walked to school improvement plan

Surveys

Other

AdvancED Standard 7: Commitment to Continuous Improvement

7.5 Monitors and communicates the results of improvement efforts to stakeholders

- a. *How does the leadership ensure that the improvement plan is implemented, monitored, achieved, communicated to stakeholders, and used for future improvement?*

HIGHLY FUNCTIONAL

The leadership has developed clear procedures to regularly monitor instructional and organizational systems in an effort to evaluate their success in raising student achievement. The data collected are used as the basis for modifications and future improvement efforts. Relevant, appropriate, and meaningful results are recognized and communicated in a consistent, ongoing manner to all stakeholders.

OPERATIONAL

The leadership has developed clear procedures to monitor instructional and organizational systems in an effort to evaluate their success in raising student achievement. The data collected are used to modify strategies. Results are recognized and communicated frequently to all stakeholders.

EMERGING

Instructional and organizational systems are inconsistently monitored. An effort is made to communicate with stakeholders.

NOT EVIDENT

Instructional and organizational systems are not monitored. Communication with stakeholders is not evident.

Suggested Evidence

Monitoring and evaluation plan for school improvement plan

Minutes/attendance lists from school improvement team meetings showing monitoring and evaluation

Schedule of school improvement planning meeting topics

Feedback/revision documents indicating responsiveness to feedback and use for improvement

Procedure for recognizing team for their work

Plan for communicating results to stakeholders; i. e. meeting minutes, newsletters

Surveys

Other

AdvancED Standard 7: Commitment to Continuous Improvement

7.6 Evaluates and documents the effectiveness and impact of its continuous process of improvement

a. *What is the school's plan to analyze and evaluate the impact and effectiveness of its strategies and interventions on student achievement and organizational effectiveness?*

HIGHLY FUNCTIONAL

The school improvement plan identifies tools for outcome evaluation that are linked to stated goals, strategies, and interventions. Disaggregated data measuring student performance, organizational effectiveness, and community impact are analyzed by school committees on an ongoing basis. Staff members reflect together on learnings from evaluation data.

OPERATIONAL

The school improvement plan identifies tools for outcome evaluation that are linked to stated goals, strategies, and interventions. Data measuring student performance and organizational effectiveness are analyzed on a periodic basis. Staff members use evaluation data to guide their professional practice.

EMERGING

The school improvement plan includes an evaluation component. Data measuring student performance and organizational inputs are evaluated, but are not clearly linked back to activities set forth in the plan. Staff members are aware of school evaluation data.

NOT EVIDENT

The school improvement plan pays limited attention to evaluation. Achievement data are reviewed on a periodic basis but play a minimal role in the identification of school improvement goals, strategies, activities, and professional development.

Suggested Evidence

Evaluation plan and results

Revisions to school improvement plan

Professional development topics

School improvement plan and process employed in development

Minutes of action items

Other

AdvancED Standard 7: Commitment to Continuous Improvement

7.6

- b. How is the information gained from the evaluation of the plan used for making decisions about student learning?*

HIGHLY FUNCTIONAL

Outcome data from the evaluation of continuous improvement strategies are used to inform future changes to the design of the school improvement plan. Process data point to areas where implementation could be improved through standardization, increased clarity, or changes in protocols or practice. Satisfaction data suggest improvements in stakeholder involvement or communication.

OPERATIONAL

Outcome data from the evaluation of continuous improvement strategies have been used to inform future changes to the design and/or implementation of the school improvement plan.

EMERGING

The evaluation of continuous improvement strategies is underway and will be used to inform future changes to the design and/or implementation of the school improvement plan.

NOT EVIDENT

Disciplined continuous improvement is in its first iteration, and no evaluation feedback is yet being undertaken.

Suggested Evidence

Evaluation plan and results

Revisions to school improvement plan

Professional development topics

School improvement plan and process employed in development

Minutes of action items

Surveys

Other

Standard-Level Contextual Narrative

You have completed your self-assessment responses to the indicators and questions contained in this standard and have identified the kind of evidence that a visitor to your school could find to substantiate your self-assessment.

This part of the self-assessment provides you with an opportunity to reflect upon your responses in this standard and draft a narrative describing the school's unique context as it relates to this standard. To assist you in crafting the narrative the following questions are offered:

Questions:

- As you review the responses to the indicators and rubrics, what major trends, themes, areas of focus, or goals emerge that cut across this standard?
- How will you use the insights gained from this self-assessment to inform and enhance your improvement efforts related to this standard?

Self-Assessment Worksheet Directions

The Self-Assessment Worksheet is intended to be used as a tool to assist the school in conducting and completing its self-assessment. The tool is essentially a worksheet that may be used to facilitate discussion of data collection and analysis of the standards, indicators, focus questions and rubrics. Results are recorded on the worksheet and compiled for the person responsible for completing the online entry of data. This may be the school leader or a designee. Each team/person using the worksheets should have a copy of the complete packet for the standard being addressed.

- Step 1:** Download the blank template and complete a page for each indicator and its corresponding focus questions. Fill in the standard; indicator and focus question at the top of the worksheet. So, for example, if you are preparing for a comprehensive review and discussion of all the indicators associated with Standard 1, you would identify the standard at the top of the page and then list the Indicator and corresponding Focus Question. In the case of Standard 1: Vision and Purpose, you would have at least 6-7 pages completed (one page per focus question).
- Step 2:** Convene the team or persons delegated to conduct the assessment of the standard and begin assessing and analyzing each indicator through the lens of the focus questions.
- Step 3:** Complete each worksheet addressing observations and supporting evidence and identify the appropriate rubric level that most accurately reflects the school's adherence to the focus question.
- Step 4:** Summarize the information collected with the worksheets and make an Overall Standard Assessment at the end of the Standard Packet.

AdvancED Self-Assessment Worksheet

Reproduce this page as necessary. Use the standard packet to complete.

Standard:			
Indicator:			
Question:			
Observations <i>For the question above, share observations that would accurately describe the status of your school in relationship to the question and indicator. Consider both qualitative and quantitative data.</i>	Supporting Evidence <i>Where would I go to find this? How can I show that the school meets the question?</i>	Rubric Rating <i>To what degree are the practices and processes in place at your school that indicate adherence to the question?</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Highly Functional <input type="checkbox"/> Operational <input type="checkbox"/> Emerging <input type="checkbox"/> Not Evident Briefly state why you have selected this rubric level:

AdvancED Self-Assessment Standard Summary Sheet

Reproduce this page as necessary. Use Self-Assessment Worksheet

Standard:	
Indicator:	Focus Question Rubric Level <i>(Check one)</i>
Focus Question:	<input type="radio"/> Highly Functional <input type="radio"/> Operational <input type="radio"/> Emerging <input type="radio"/> Not Evident
Focus Question:	<input type="radio"/> Highly Functional <input type="radio"/> Operational <input type="radio"/> Emerging <input type="radio"/> Not Evident
Focus Question:	<input type="radio"/> Highly Functional <input type="radio"/> Operational <input type="radio"/> Emerging <input type="radio"/> Not Evident
Indicator:	Focus Question Rubric Level <i>(Check one)</i>
Focus Question:	<input type="radio"/> Highly Functional <input type="radio"/> Operational <input type="radio"/> Emerging <input type="radio"/> Not Evident
Focus Question:	<input type="radio"/> Highly Functional <input type="radio"/> Operational <input type="radio"/> Emerging <input type="radio"/> Not Evident
Focus Question:	<input type="radio"/> Highly Functional <input type="radio"/> Operational <input type="radio"/> Emerging <input type="radio"/> Not Evident